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SUBJECT: CITES/CORAL: ITALY WILL SUPPORT WORKSHOP; ASKS IF CHINA
CORAL ISSUE SHOULD BE ON AGENDA

Refs: a) 8/7/08 Signoretti/Daves e-mail b) State 68498

¶1. (U) On August 6, Post met with Environment Ministry Nature Protection Directorate Director General Aldo Cosentino to discuss the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) proposal to convene an international workshop on corallium science, management and enforcement in Italy (ref b). Antonio Maturani and Marco Valentini, respectively head and expert of Italy's management authority for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), attended as well. Cosentino is ready to support the CITES coral workshop and agreed to hold it in late January 2009.

¶2. (SBU) In a separate conversation, Valentini said that some Italian trade associations want Italy to submit a reservation regarding the recent Chinese request to list four species of coral under CITES Appendix III. He noted that, because of the European Commission's competence in the trade area, this reservation would have to be requested by the Commission for the European Union as a whole, with potentially huge consequences for European coral exports. He also noted the difficulty in distinguishing the four Chinese coral species from others found in Italian waters, which the Environment Ministry believes are not at all threatened.

¶3. (SBU) In the general conversation, DG Cosentino suggested that the China issue could be included in the Italy workshop. He asked Valentini and Maturani to consult with the CITES Commission in Geneva and with the European Commission on that possibility. Cosentino views the aim of workshop as collecting information on what is known about the state of corallium, without pre-judging whether or not they should be controlled by CITES. Valentini noted the importance of determining what coral species can be distinguished from others, in considering whether or not to adopt CITES trade controls on them.

¶4. (U) As reported in ref a, the Italian Environment Ministry will choose a conference organizer and site as soon as Environment Minister Prestigiacomo decides on the location, which likely will be in Sicily (the Minister's electoral district). Cosentino's staff will prepare a draft agenda and a list of proposed participants to share with NOAA by mid-September. (Cosentino, Maturani and Valentini all received ref b talking points and non-paper, as well as the November 6, 2007 letter from NOAA's Dr. Brucker to DG Cosentino, mentioned in ref b.)

¶5. (U) Valentini, who knows the issue well and speaks excellent English, will serve as NOAA's POC for the workshop. His contact information is:

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